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## **City of Chattanooga completes relocation of residents at 11th Street homeless encampment**

*Dozens housed in permanent homes and at temporary sanctioned encampment over two-month transition process*

**Chattanooga, Tenn. (Wednesday, June 1)** - The city on Wednesday concluded a two-month process to relocate residents experiencing homelessness from an 11th street encampment, which sat next to an active rail line.

Following a site census in March, all residents were offered the choice of a referral to a new temporary sanctioned encampment or a referral to work toward permanent housing through the Chattanooga Housing Authority. Those who declined housing were offered a new tent and relocation assistance.

The City's Office of Homelessness and Supportive Housing has placed more than 35 residents experiencing homelessness into permanent homes over the past two months. The City's new temporary sanctioned encampment currently has 15 residents, with more in the process of moving in. The temporary sanctioned encampment, operated by nonprofit Help Right Here, anticipates admitting 60 residents by the end of Summer.

"The solution to homelessness is a home, and we will continue to work every day to help our most vulnerable residents find an off-ramp from homelessness that works for them and their families," said Sam Wolfe, director of the city's Office of Homelessness and Supportive Housing. "Since its inception, our team has placed hundreds of residents into homes, and along with our partners at the Chattanooga Regional Homeless Coalition, we will continue to work to both tend to their immediate needs as well as help them navigate the path to housing."

The city notified the 140 residents who were camping next to the rail line of the May 31 move-out date two months ago, including placing a large sign and speaking to residents individually. Workers in the city's Office of Homelessness and Supportive Housing visited the encampment multiple times each week, and daily over the last two weeks, to ensure that all residents had the opportunity to relocate safely.

Studies show a direct correlation between rising housing prices and rising homelessness, particularly when wages do not keep pace. Mayor Tim Kelly has directed the city to undertake a number of initiatives to increase the supply and affordability of housing in the city, which has seen rising demand for housing at a time when few units are available.

This year's budget includes an unprecedented \$33 million toward a \$100 million affordable housing initiative that will create and preserve thousands of homes over the next several years. The city is also undergoing a top-to-bottom zoning code assessment to remove barriers to the creation of housing that Chattanooga residents can afford, and has rolled out incentives for housing providers to rent to low-income families.

The city has also funded an Eviction Prevention Initiative, which has helped hundreds of Chattanooga residents, including more than 200 children, stay in their homes. The city is working to expand the program in partnership with Hamilton County General Sessions Court to create an Eviction Diversion Initiative, which includes funding for a coordinator working at the city. This will enable landlords and tenants to receive assistance in preventing evictions before they are adjudicated in court. The expansion is made possible by a grant from the National Center for State Courts.

Beyond the creation of housing and the prevention of evictions, the city is also working to expand workforce opportunities for residents through a number of job training initiatives.

The city's EMPACT program provides Google IT certification to residents that will unlock their ability to gain a middle-class job. And the city's funding for the Construction Academy in the former Mary Ann Garber school will allow hundreds of residents to receive skilled trades training.

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